

PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE POSTPARENTAL PERIOD  
AMONG THIRTY-FIVE SELECTED MOTHERS IN WICHITA, KANSAS

by

MARGARET WEIGLE RYAN

B. A. Southwestern College, 1955

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Approved by:

Dwalee H. McCord  
Major Professor

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In our society, with its emphasis on youth, mothers become so concerned with their children's growing that they do not think ahead to the time when their children will no longer be a part of the parental home. There are 42,000,000 married couples in the United States, and fewer than half have children at home. Of the childless couples, two-thirds, or as many as 15,000,000 couples, are in the postparental category (Foote, 1961). Foote (1961) charged that it is about time that relevant knowledge about marital relations during the years from forty-five onward is acquired.

Sussman (1955) stated that the launching of children usually occurred during the parents' middle age, when mothers are approximately forty-eight years old. He believed this time to be a crucial period in the family life cycle both because of the postparental stage's average length of fourteen years (Glick, 1955) and because of the relative newness of the postparental stage to the Twentieth Century.

The postparental period is new to this century for several reasons (Duvall, 1962). Early childbearing has resulted in an early release from the responsibilities and duties fulfilled by parents while their children are at home. A healthy, lengthened life span for both the husband and the

wife has postponed widowhood. Therefore, most married couples can anticipate an increased duration of time between the busy years of childrearing and the aging years of retirement, a duration of time that Sussman (1955) cited as recently becoming identified as a research area.

Sociologists cite lack of preparation by women for the drastic role change as a primary reason for the criticalness of the postparental period. In a study at the University of Minnesota, Rose (1955) found that life satisfaction of middle-class women as they enter middle age is a function of the degree to which they are able to assume another central role to replace the declining role of homemaker, especially when our culture does not necessarily expect them to assume new roles.

Duvall (1957) believed that preparing for what lies ahead is a part of family living. In addition to this preparation for the future, successful accomplishment of developmental tasks during earlier stages will determine future happiness and success. In the stage "Families in the Middle Years," Duvall included as an implication for education of young adults the establishment of programs preparing them for their middle and later years. Morgan (1959) emphasized education within the framework of the family life cycle when she queried, "What is important for people to learn to do in earlier stages of the family life cycle in order to live with satisfaction

in the stage of the contracting family?" In a 1958 Report to the Committee on Research, Division of Home Economics Association of Land Grant Colleges and State Universities, the adjustment of the homemaker to the inevitable changes in family size and composition was stressed as a place in which home economics could make a contribution to research.

Knapp (1955) stated,

Too little is known about how women are meeting or how they can meet this major shift that comes with the middle years. Exploration of the needs of this period in the lives of women and of creative ways to meet these needs poses a challenge to the entire field of education not solely for the middle years, but because of the greatly increasing number of years in this period of later maturity.

Research that will shed light on women in these years is an outstanding need of the times.

There is an increasing interest in women's changing roles, but it is largely speculative in nature. Gass(1959) cited a need for precise research findings on women in their middle years, particularly for use by counselors who work with young girls.

Before educators and others concerned about preparing women for their middle years can offer guidance, data concerning existing attitudes and preparation must be collected. Studies available were concerned with adjustments and satisfactions of couples and women presently in the post-parental phase, the educational or work plans of adult women, or the plans of college girls for their adult lives. Little



research has dealt with young adults and their attitudes toward and preparation for this period in the family life cycle. Since planning has been stressed as a necessary element to serve as a guide in making an effective transition from the heavy responsibilities of childrearing to the postparental phase of the family life cycle, the present study concentrated on determining if women actually were giving any prior consideration to the postparental period. Hence, the subjects were chosen because of their present heavy family responsibilities. This study was unique in that it dealt with women prior to the postparental period, and it compared two groups--college and non-college trained women. The two groups were compared to determine if the differences in levels of educational attainment made any difference in the nature and extent of plans, as well as expectations, for the postparental period.

The major objectives were: (1) to discover specific plans that have been made in anticipation of the postparental period by college and non-college women whose oldest children are in junior high school and (2) to compare the expectations and plans of the two groups--college and non-college women.

College women were defined as women who had attended college for one or more years. High school graduates, graduates of business colleges, registered nurses without degrees, and women who had attended less than one year of college were grouped in the non-college classification.



The hypotheses were as follows:

There is no difference between two groups defined as college mothers and non-college mothers in regard to the following:

- 1) Plans being made for employment outside the home.
- 2) Desire for employment during the postparental period.
- 3) Plans for adding to formal education.
- 4) Plans and expectations for postparental period regarding community, social and leisure activities, and major undertakings with husbands.
- 5) Plans for use of time in the postparental period presently occupied by child-related activities and responsibilities.
- 6) Expected reactions to the anticipated changes in their lives after their children are grown.

The relationships of factors other than those formally hypothesized were investigated. The relationships were those between amount of family income and employment plans for foreseeable future, family income and expectations for postparental employment, expectations of postparental employment and husbands' views of such employment, and employment qualifications and job interests.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research focusing upon the middle years, particularly upon women in the period when their children no longer reside in the parental home, is still somewhat limited and offers varying and contradicting statements and conclusions regarding this segment of time in parents' lives.

#### Role Changes for the Postparental Period

Cavan (1955) defined the postparental couple as middle-aged, usually in their forties and fifties. She stated that the significance of middle age is less physical than social and psychological. The most obvious change is the departure of the adolescent and young adult from the family, leaving the husband and wife as the family unit. Cavan continued her discussion by emphasizing the need for the remnant group, the husband and wife, to reorganize. This organization might take the form of escape in identifying with adolescents, clinging to maternal or parental roles, reacting neurotically, or seeking extramarital relations. On the other hand, satisfactory adjustment might be made by achieving new status of equality with mature children and shifting from the parental to a partnership role.

The importance of finding life meaningful apart from roles as parents as the secret for success in relationships between generations was expressed by Duvall (1960). For women the difficulty of relinquishing the active role of mother, unless they have prepared themselves through the years for a life beyond their children, also was recognized (Duvall, 1962).

Havighurst (1956) noted that there are some roles in which women are usually more active and find greater satisfaction after forty-five. He listed the following possible roles: worker, club and association member, mother, homemaker, grandmother, wife, child of aging parents, friend, church member, citizen, and user of leisure time. He believed that women must create new conceptions of themselves that will allow them to become happy and useful in several of these roles. In doing so, they will accomplish the developmental task of this period of intellectual and emotional expansion.

#### Planning for the Postparental Period

The need for planning was found throughout the literature written relative to the postparental period. Myrdal and Klein (1956) said that it was absurd for a youthful grandmother of forty-five to feel she is entitled to retire on her laurels as did her own grandmother. These authors continued that mothers who made no plans outside the family for their future

"not only play havoc with their own lives but will make nervous wrecks of their overprotected children and of their husbands." They suggested that women should visualize their life span in a succession of three segments: a period of training and education, a period of years devoted to raising a family, and finally, a period in which past training is put to wider social use outside the family.

A few research studies or portions of studies dealing with actual life plans of women have been conducted. Berry (1955) surveyed 677 randomly selected freshman and sophomore women at fifteen U. S. colleges and universities regarding their life plans. In answer to questions about plans for their middle life, nearly one-half of the students participating in the survey said they had given some thought to when their children would be college age. The remainder of the students were about equally divided between those who admitted they had given no thought to later years and those who reported they had devoted considerable thought to this period. A substantial number of students (40%) thought they might be interested in a career outside the home at that time.

A study conducted by Rose (1951) in four sociology classes at the University of Minnesota dealt with the adequacy of women's expectations for adult roles. One finding was that a large majority of the women were planning to retire permanently from all paid work before age thirty. They did

not seem to be thinking ahead to an occupation for the period after their children would no longer consume their time.

Friedan (1963), in her now well-publicized survey, asked her own Smith College classmates about their plans for when their children were grown. She reported that 60% had concrete plans for work or study. They planned to finish their education, because many who had no career ambitions in college did have such ambitions at the time of the survey. However, 80% of the women regretted not having planned seriously to use their education in professional work.

Another study dealing with future educational plans of 882 middle class, middle income women in the Kansas City area was conducted by Berry and Epstein (1963). About 70% of the women said that they hoped to continue their education, but only 20% reported actual plans for doing so. Women in the older age group were more likely to report concrete plans than younger women. The authors noticed that any woman's plans were affected by the wishes of her family, particularly those of her husband. If she were not forced to choose a lifetime occupation early, she would lack the pressure in later years to pursue anything of interest.

Lloyd-Jones (1958) charged that girls are looking no further ahead into their lives than did their grandmothers. She further stated that young women, and those who educate them, were not considering the time in the young women's



lives beyond marrying and having children. Even though large numbers of women at ages thirty, forty, or fifty are re-entering the labor force, the taking of such a step when family responsibilities have decreased is not planned by the women nor does it have the approval of their husbands. Also Lloyd-Jones (1958) blamed the women for haphazard planning but said that they have had no channeling either from precedent or from counseling agencies.

#### Adjustments During the Postparental Period

The reason for the lack of precedent was pointed out by Deutscher (1964) when he stated that research focusing directly on the postparental phase of the family life cycle was practically non-existent prior to the mid-1950's. In one of his own contributions to research concerning this relatively new family life cycle stage, Deutscher conducted a door-to-door survey in two socio-economic areas of Kansas City, Missouri, which resulted in open end, tape recorded interviews with thirty-three postparental couples. Data gathered seemed to indicate that the postparental phase is not generally defined unfavorably by those involved in it. In an earlier paper Deutscher (1962) cited that theoretically it might be expected that the transition to postparental life would be a difficult one for middle-aged spouses to make because of the lack of role models. The lack of opportunity for anticipatory



socialization because one of their own parents was dead before the last of their own siblings was launched ought theoretically to make for an extremely difficult situation. However, in Deutscher's experience, despite expectations based on theory and clinical experience, urban middle-class postparental couples did not seem to have found adaptations impossible or pathological. Many of the middle-aged spouses viewed this stage as a time of new freedoms.

Sussman (1955) studied 103 middle-class families in New Haven, Connecticut, ninety-seven of whom had one or more married children living away from home. The well-adjusted parents of this sample were drawn closer together after leaving of children as evidenced in the development of joint activity patterns. The women, more than the men, stated a need for new activities to take the place of former child-rearing duties. If the families of the two generations lived in close proximity, the parents had little need for activity substitutes for family functions.

In another study of ninety-seven middle-class families conducted in New Haven, Connecticut, Sussman (1954) noted that parents who had raised their children developmentally had an easier time adjusting to their child's marriage status than those parents who had reared their children traditionally. Easier adjustment to children's marrying was accomplished by the parents who had followed developmental childrearing

practices because they had grown with their children as the children passed successive age periods. These same parents had encouraged self-reliance and independence without the severance of affectionate ties. Elders using the traditional approach to childrearing had kept more strict control over their children and had retarded emancipation. The traditional parents tended to constantly advise and were less apt to recognize their children's new, independent state. Thus the relationship of the families at the generational level becomes impaired.

In a study of 208 middle-class fathers and mothers of students in sociology classes at the University of Minnesota, Rose (1955) hypothesized that there would be differences in factors affecting life satisfaction of middle-class men and women as they enter middle age. He further hypothesized that women would find it necessary to find a new central role as their role of homemaker declined. Results of Rose's study showed the husbands' and wives' satisfactions were highly correlated. Rose concluded that women who marry under twenty or over thirty are more likely to be dissatisfied when their children grow up than are women who marry between twenty and thirty. Dissatisfied women are less likely to have assumed a paying job and claim they spend an inordinate amount of time on housework. The amount of social participation was associated with life satisfaction among both men and women.

Somewhat related to the study of marital satisfaction is a study of marital unhappiness in the life cycle conducted by Bossard and Boll (1955). Their case material, derived from studying 440 men and women, suggested that the late forties and early fifties are a crisis period for many women, partly because their children no longer retain their earlier dependence.

In the introduction to a study regarding postparental adjustment, Axelson (1960) stated that there was a general consensus among students of the postparental period which suggested that mothers face severe adjustment problems. His conclusions drawn from a questionnaire mailed to persons listed in wedding license applications in two communities in Washington were contrary to his hypotheses. Data indicated this period of life seemed to be as satisfying as other periods. The returns from 265 women indicated a tendency toward a concern about their health and a greater need for outside contacts. A significant increase in loneliness was indicated also.

In the New York City area Davidoff and Markewich (1961) carried out a descriptive study of motherhood. In lengthy depth interviews of fifty, upper-class, college educated women, general agreement was found as to the lack of challenge, as well as the lack of clarity, in the contributions to society that are expected of a middle-aged woman. Four women out of

the group were employed in full-time, paying positions, and ten more were part-time workers, six were homemakers only, and thirty-eight were involved in some volunteer activities. Of particular interest for the present study were eight factors suggested by the authors which motivate women to leave the "ease and lack of pressure of home life for work or volunteer activities (Davidoff and Markewich, 1961)." These were:

- 1) The possession of a salable skill, or training, or some area of special interest.
- 2) Being recruited to take a specific job or help with a volunteer activity.
- 3) Participation in the activity offering challenge and emotional satisfaction.
- 4) A financial or emotional need, not necessarily realistic, determined by the woman involved.
- 5) The kind of attitudes toward participation in a job or activity held by husband, children, friends, parents, and others in the community.
- 6) The woman's self-image which appeared to be affected by role expectations as influenced by socio-economic background, early identifications with mother and father, early experiences, and the influence of status on choice.

- 7) The life-style. If the women had worked during college, before marriage, and/or during early marriage, they were working at the time of the study, either full or part-time in a characteristic pattern of their earlier work.
- 8) Physiological factors of middle age affecting both husband and wife.

Only the women who saw themselves as more mother than wife could not adapt easily to this new period. Those with several children said the gradualness with which they had reached the postparental period had been helpful. Many of the women looked on it as a part of living and a re-organization period.

#### Occupational Roles in the Postparental Period

Steinmann (1961) queried, "How do married women between ages forty and fifty feel about working?" Fifty-one girls between seventeen and twenty-two, attending a college in a suburban town near New York City, and their mothers, were administered the Fand Inventory composed of thirty-four items concerning women's relationships, needs, and responsibilities. Most of the mothers in the study were wary of combining vocational pursuits with marriage. The few mothers who were working because they wanted to felt that unless a woman is vocationally active and creative, it is difficult for her to



be interesting and stimulating. The women who expressed a vague desire to resume vocational roles did not seem to be willing to put forth the extra energy required to work and simultaneously manage a home. A few women thought it might be a good idea to get more education at this stage, but none appeared to want to make the sacrifices to attain this goal.

In concurrence with the opinions of women in the above study, Caplow (1954) stated that even though the woman somewhere between the ages of thirty and fifty finds her work load as full-time housewife has declined, she is unable to add another occupational role. He said that the motive to do so is not very strong in middle income groups, partially because the family income is likely to be approaching a maximum at this time. In addition, there are only a few serious occupations which are freely open to women; many of these occupations require training that is difficult to acquire by middle age or that has already been half-forgotten.

#### Education and Counseling for the Postparental Period

A number of sources advocated the importance of early guidance and long-range educational plans for women. In their conclusions Davidoff and Markewich (1961) offered numerous implications for education such as:

- 1) To help young women in their youth understand themselves and evaluate properly their function as wife and mother.



- 2) To constructively utilize the anxiety of dissatisfied women through imaginative programs.
- 3) To provide skillful guidance to help women fulfill themselves.
- 4) To help all women through self-understanding to see where they might best use themselves as individuals and as a group.

Monsour (1963) saw educational measures, which would obviate the need for somatic and psychological illnesses, as providing an outlet for postchildbearing tension. Frank (1956) charged that high schools and colleges have not been much concerned in giving women whole-life orientation to help them develop in youth resources and capacities upon which they can draw in the middle years. A report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (1963) expressed concern that the woman who marries and is raising a family has urgent educational needs that, so far, have been badly neglected. The report stated that the counseling of girls should be done so that they foresee the later as well as the earlier phases of adulthood. During the intensive homemaking years, women should be encouraged and given opportunities for acquiring new skills or keeping skills up to date for the three decades of life after forty. The report further stated that to be usable, continuing education must be geographically available.

In a study directly concerned with counseling and woman's changing role, Gass (1959) interviewed eighty-five upper middle-class married women over age twenty-five and under fifty who were natural mothers of one or more children. Data from this study tended to show that satisfaction from home and family was not all encompassing. Implications for counseling and of interest for the present study were as follows:

- 1) Counseling that takes a woman only to marriage is incomplete and does a disservice because it strengthens the impression that marriage and family will lead to full satisfaction, an impression that may create guilt if a woman finds this is not true for her.
- 2) The lack of vocational guidance for women was clear. Seventy per cent of the untrained respondents regretted lack of training, and fifty per cent of the trained women expressed dissatisfaction with choice. Women should be encouraged to choose a vocation that not only offers immediate opportunity but also is one to which they may return without much difficulty when children are grown.
- 3) It is imperative that guidance programs be planned that will enable women to achieve optimum creativity in present and future personal, family, and community life.

Rothwell (1962) echoed the findings of the Gass (1959) study when he stressed the need for young women to have a clear picture of the future. He stated that women's patterns of expectations were simple but less flexible than men's, and that women did not have a sense of the multiple roles they can and must play in our society, especially when their families are grown.

Linton (1963) acknowledged the need for a new interpretation of marriage which goes beyond the main functions of being an economic unit and rearing children. Our culture has not developed patterns that will give the middle-aged woman something satisfying to do in spite of her losing touch with the rapid developments in most of the professions, if she had had a profession. However, Linton observed that women of the younger generation were creating new social roles for themselves. He surmised that as wives and women, they would be happier than their mothers.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Sample

The sample consisted of thirty-five women who were full-time, nonemployed homemakers for the past ten years. Their names and addresses were obtained by having pupils who were the eldest children in their families in selected classes at Robinson Junior High School, Wichita, Kansas, fill out family information sheets (Appendix). Because of the geographical location of Robinson Junior High School, families of the pupils who attend this school are primarily middle-class.

From the material obtained from the family information sheets, a list of names and addresses of eighty-five women determined as appearing to meet the criteria for this study was compiled. These names were then numbered consecutively, the numbers were placed in a box, and sixty numbers were drawn for names of women who were to receive letters asking them to participate in the present study. This procedure was in accordance with a suggestion for randomness made by Downie and Heath (1959). A letter which explained the purpose of the study and asked for an interview (Appendix) was sent to each of the sixty women. A telephone contact was made to schedule a definite time for an interview. Maccoby (1954)

noted that the refusal rate could be reduced by the use of preceding letters and phone calls.

For varying reasons, twenty-three of the sixty women contacted were not interviewed. Of the originally drawn sixty names, fourteen did not want to participate, two were seriously ill, two had moved out of town, three did not qualify because of recent full-time employment, one was a grandmother, and one could not be reached. Thirty-seven women granted interviews, and on further consultation two of these women did not meet the criteria for this investigation. One of these two women was a divorcee, and the other had worked outside the home on a part-time basis for the past eight years. Thirty-five women furnished the data for the present study.

### Instruments

The research technique of using interviews was enthusiastically recommended by Friedan (1963), author of The Feminine Mystique. In a personal letter to the investigator dated July 2, 1965, and sent as a response to an inquiry about her study of her Smith College classmates, Friedan commented that a dozen good interviews provided more insights than a hundred mailed questionnaires. Using interviews for data collection was chosen because, as pointed out by Festinger and Katz (1953), it is a good method for obtaining experience and

information "about beliefs, feelings, past experience and future intention."

Two separate interview instruments were prepared for use. The general information sheet was designed to obtain factual data concerning present age, age at the time of marriage, occupation of husband, home ownership, income, education, and number and ages of children. The interview schedule was used to glean factual information on work experiences and plans in that area, educational plans, social participation, and family activities with husband and children, as well as expectations and opinions regarding the postparental period and the respondent's preparation for that time. Such questions were asked as "As you see it now, would you like to work outside the home when your children are grown?" "Do you expect that you will work outside the home when your children are grown?" "Do you expect to join any new clubs and organizations when your children are grown?" "Have you and your husband made any plans for major undertakings when the children leave home?" and "How do you visualize your life when your children are grown?" The general information sheet was checked by the respondents, and the interview schedule was administered by the investigator. This procedure followed the suggestion made by Hyman et. al. (1954) that interviews were more appropriate for items requiring complexity of definition; whereas, for specific items such as age or education, interviews yielded



more "rounded-off" figures than did self-administered check lists.

Both the check lists and the interview schedule were pre-tested with ten Wichita, Kansas, women who met approximately the same criteria as the women in the final sample. The pilot study was conducted to evaluate the responses elicited by the questions, to learn the amount of time needed for the interview, and to assist the interviewer in developing techniques. Following the pretests, wording of several questions was clarified, and the questions were arranged in a more logical sequence. Some questions were combined, others expanded, three questions were omitted, and five questions or parts of questions were added in the final versions (Appendix).

#### Collection of Data

All women were interviewed by the author in their homes at their convenience, which was usually during the late afternoon prior to the husband's arrival. The thirty-five women were friendly and hospitable, and rapport was established readily. Often the visit was prolonged following the interview and coffee was served. Several women commented that the interview had stimulated their thinking about the time when their children would no longer be at home, and many of them expressed interest in receiving the results of the study.

### Analysis of Data

Analysis of data was made by the chi square tests. The regrouping of original responses such as yes, no, and undecided or favorable, unfavorable, and uncertain into two groups with the positive responses forming one group and the negative or undecided responses forming the other group facilitated analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Description of Respondents

The respondents interviewed ranged in age from thirty-two to forty-five with the median age being thirty-nine years. Ages at the time of marriage varied from seventeen to twenty-eight with the average being close to twenty-two. The approximate annual incomes reported by the respondents extended from \$5,000 to over \$30,000 with the greatest number (15) indicating annual incomes in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 range. According to the Classified Index of Occupations and Industries of the United States Bureau of Census (1960), reported occupations of the husbands of the women interviewed were placed in three categories as follows: managers, officials, and proprietors (14); professional and technical (17); and combined sales and clerical (4). The thirty-five women had a total of eighty-six children with the average number of children per family being 2.45. Ages of the children ranged from two to fifteen years. The range of participation in organizations encompassed zero to fifteen. When asked to describe how they viewed their relationships to their community, eighteen women said it was active; fourteen indicated moderately active; and three called their participation inactive. There seemed to be little relationship between the amount of

organization membership and how the respondents viewed their activeness. Thirty-one mothers reported that they belonged to PTA, a child-related organization. Thirty women said they assisted in community activities such as Scouts, Campfire Girls, 4-H, and Sunday School that were related to their children.

Eight respondents indicated high school graduation as the last completed year of education, and six checked that they had attended and/or graduated from business college, nurses' training, or similar institutions after high school graduation. Seven respondents indicated college attendance for one or more years while fourteen were college graduates. For discussion purposes the respondents who completed high school and the respondents who took additional training other than college will be referred to as the non-college group. The respondents who attended one or more years of college as well as the college graduates will be discussed as the college group.

Twelve of the women interviewed had worked while attending high school. Thirteen of the twenty-nine who had training including college beyond high school had worked while acquiring this training. Twenty-five women indicated an interval of time after the completion of their education and the time of their marriages, and the same twenty-five respondents said they had been employed during this interval. Thirteen of the

twenty-five were in the college group, and twelve were in the non-college group. The greatest number (6) of the thirteen in the college group who were employed after education and prior to marriage were teachers, while the greatest number (7) of the non-college group were employed as secretaries.

### Plans and Expectations Regarding Outside Employment

#### Plans for Employment in Foreseeable Future

Ten of the thirty-five women who were interviewed indicated they planned to take a job in the foreseeable future. Of these ten planning employment, three indicated they would take a job "when the last child began school"; three "when all children were in junior high"; one "when all children were living away from home," and two checked times "other" than listed above. Nineteen of the total thirty-five respondents did not plan to work outside the home, while six reported that they were undecided.

The first hypothesis tested was that there is no difference between two groups defined as college mothers and non-college mothers with regard to the plans they are making for employment in the foreseeable future. Chi square analysis indicated no relationship between the amount of education and plans for employment in the foreseeable future (Table 1).

TABLE 1  
AMOUNT OF EDUCATION AND  
PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE

		Amount of Education				
		Non-college		College		
Plans for Employment	Yes	Fo 3 (.30)	Fe 4.0	Fo 7 (.70)	Fe 6.0	10 (1.00)
	No	11 (.44)	10.0	14 (.56)	15.0	25 (1.00)
		14		21		35
						$\chi^2 = .583$ ns

Fo- frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
ns, not significant

Desire for Postparental Employment and Amount of Education

A significant relationship was found between the amount of education the respondents had and their desire to work outside the home during the postparental period (Table 2). Thirteen of the twenty-one women in the college group indicated that they would like to work outside the home when their children were grown, and seven of the thirteen said they expected to do so. Three of the non-college group expressed desire for outside employment during the postparental time, and the same three women expected to be employed at that time. Two of the fourteen non-college women commented respectively,



"I don't want a job of any kind," and "I have no desire to work." One college woman said that she "wouldn't enjoy anything."

TABLE 2  
AMOUNT OF EDUCATION AND  
DESIRE FOR POSTPARENTAL EMPLOYMENT

		Amount of Education			
		Non-college		College	
Would like to work outside home when children are grown	Yes	Fo 3 (.19)	Fe 6.4	Fo 13 (.81)	Fe 9.6 16 (1.00)
	No	11 (.58)	7.6	8 (.42)	11.4 19 (1.00)
		14		21	35
		$\chi^2 = 5.545^*$			

Fo-frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
p = 0.05

It was expected that the college group might express more desire for outside employment because of interests fostered during earlier college experiences. The evidence appeared to support this expectation. However, there appeared to be a considerable gap between "liking to work" and actually expecting to or making specific plans for postparental employment. One college group woman commented that she didn't agree with

the "unhappy, educated housewife" articles found in popular magazines, while another college woman said that educated women couldn't be expected to be satisfied with full-time homemaking only. The other nineteen college group women's opinions probably lie somewhere between these two views.

#### Family Income and Employment Plans for Foreseeable Future

Analysis of the relationship between the respondents' job plans and the amount of the family income was statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence. Apparently, feelings of a need to supplement the family income, usually for the children's college education, was a more tangible motivating factor in seeking outside employment than amount of education. To facilitate statistical analysis, incomes reported by the respondents were placed in two groups: those over and under \$20,000 annually. Table 3 presents the relationship between family income and employment plans.

TABLE 3  
FAMILY INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT PLANS  
FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE

		Family Income			
		Under \$20,000		Over \$20,000	
Plan to Take Job in Foresee- able Future	Yes	Po 12 (1.00)	Fe 8.9	Po 0 (0)	Fe 3.1 12 (1.00)
	No	14 (.61)	17.1	9 (.39)	5.9 23 (1.00)
		26		9	35
		$\chi^2 = 6.370^*$			

Po-frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
\*p. = 0.05

Family Income and Expectations for Postparental Employment

Statistical analysis of the relationship between family income and the women's expectations that they would work outside the home when their children were grown was not significant (Table 4).

TABLE 4

## FAMILY INCOME AND POSTPARENTAL EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS

		Family Income			
		Under \$20,000		Over \$20,000	
Expect to be employed During Postparental Period	Yes	Fo 9 (.90)	Fe 7.4	Fo 1 (.10)	Fe 2.6 10 (1.00)
	No	17 (.68)	18.6	8 (.32)	6.4 25 (1.00)
		26		9	35
		$\chi^2 = 1.868ns$			

Fo-frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
ns, not significant

Since this finding appeared to be inconsistent with the evidence which supported a relationship between family income and plans for employment in the foreseeable future, a comparison was made between the respondents who had answered positively to either one of the following questions, "Do you plan to take a job in the foreseeable future?" and "Do you expect that you will work outside the home when your children are grown?" Of the ten women who had reported plans to take a job in the foreseeable future, three were undecided in their expectations for employment after their children were grown, and one said

she did not expect to be working at that time. Ten women, some of them who had not planned jobs in the foreseeable future, expected to work outside the home when their children were grown. Of these ten, two women had been undecided about employment in the foreseeable future and two had answered "no" to plans for employment in the foreseeable future.

The time element might have been one possible explanation for discrepancies between plans to take a job in the foreseeable future and expectations to work when children are grown. If there were still younger children or preschoolers in the family, the women might not have been able to foresee having time for employment until their family responsibilities were lessened considerably. The financial pressures of college educations for the children might not have loomed as large when there were younger children in the family in addition to the children in junior high school. Since there was a definite relationship between family income and plans for jobs in the foreseeable future, some of the women might have planned to work only until financial pressures were eased. Another explanation might lie in the respondents' lack of realization of the void that might occur upon the leave-taking of their children. Only two women reported considering employment to fill a void when children were gone. Lloyd-Jones (1958) charged that women have haphazard planning and that they are looking no further ahead into their lives than did their

grandmothers. The findings of the present study appeared to substantiate that charge.

Expectations of Postparental Employment and Husbands' Views of Employment

Women who reported that their husbands would disapprove of their working outside the home after the children were grown did not expect to work at that time. The relationship between expectations of postparental employment and the husbands' views of such employment was very highly significant.

It appeared that husband's feelings about employment, postparental or otherwise, either encouraged or deterred wives in considering outside employment. Davidoff and Markewich (1961) in their study of fifty postparental period women cited a trend regarding the fourteen women who worked. Their husbands' disapproval did not seem to deter their need to work. However, eight other women in this same study who did not work gave their husbands' strenuous objections as a reason for not working. The present study's findings supported the above statement in that women whose husbands strenuously objected did not expect to seek outside employment when family responsibilities had decreased. The husbands' views appeared to override the women's own desires as shown by Table 5.



TABLE 5

EXPECTATIONS OF POSTPARENTAL EMPLOYMENT  
AND HUSBANDS' VIEWS OF EMPLOYMENT

Expectations for Postparental Employment					
		Yes		No or undecided	
Husbands' Views	Favorable	Fo 10 (.62)	Fe 4.6	Fo 6 (.38)	Fe 11.4
	Unfavorable	0 (0)	5.4	19 (1.00)	13.6
		10		25	
				35	
$\chi^2 = 16.441^{***}$					

Fo-frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
\*\*\*p. = .001

Employment Qualifications and Job Interests

Although a significant relationship ( $p < .05$ ) was found between amount of education and the desire for postparental employment, the college group women who actually expected or planned to work at that time was relatively small in number (7 out of 21). When the college group women were asked what kind of job they could get if it were necessary, many were vague and uncertain. Two of this group said that they didn't know, seven suggested "some kind" of office work, three thought they could clerk in stores, six thought they could be substitute

teachers or regular teachers after updating certificates, one mentioned personnel work, and another indicated possible work with the government poverty program. Only the physical therapist felt she had an up-to-date, marketable skill.

When these same women were asked what they would choose to do, their responses were often in the areas of teaching (6), or the helping services which included social work (2), counseling (2), and work with handicapped (1). Other occupations varied and included research lab work, research or personnel work, publications, receptionist, secretary, specialty shop owner, and "something with children." One woman in the college group said, "I wouldn't enjoy anything." Seventeen of the college group indicated their choices of occupations would require additional education, but when asked if the required additional education would be a factor preventing them from planning employment, seventeen said "no." When answering this same question, one said "yes" and another said "somewhat."

In answer to the question "If you found it necessary to seek a job next week, what kind of job do you feel you could qualify for?", nine of the non-college group suggested some kind of office or secretarial work, one said work in a bank, one said IBM machine work, and one said sewing. When asked about what occupations they would choose, five selected various types of secretarial positions, two were interested in health

services, one wanted to do sewing of some kind, and one wanted to be a shop owner. One said she didn't know, while two emphasized they had no desire to work. Eleven of the non-college group expressed the need for additional education or training for the jobs of their choice, and thirteen felt that the necessary additional education or training would not be a factor in keeping them from working.

As Berry and Epstein (1963) found, a woman's attitude toward additional education could be a reflection of her plans for employment. Since only ten of the thirty-five women interviewed planned employment in the foreseeable future and ten expected employment during the postparental period, it would seem likely that they would not report additional education for the job desired as a deterring factor. More than half of the women interviewed did not plan or expect to work outside the home at any time. Caplow (1954) found that the motive to add another occupational role to full-time housewife, even though that role will decline, is not very strong in middle income groups. Such may have been the situation of the women in this study.

#### Plans Regarding Education

Twenty-five of the thirty-five women interviewed expressed a desire to continue to add to their formal education. Seventeen of the twenty-one respondents in the college group

reported that they wanted to continue their education as compared with eight of the fourteen women in the non-college group. However, the relationship between the amount of education of the respondents and their desire to add to their formal education was not statistically significant (Table 6).

Of the twenty-five women who said they wanted to add to their education, fifteen were undecided as to when they would actually do so. Only three said they wanted to add to their education when their children were grown. The discrepancy between aspirations and the translation of plans into action suggested that there was a difference between saying one wanted to add to her formal education and actually making plans for doing so. Only four out of the total group of thirty-five were presently enrolled in classes, two women in the total group planned to complete an unfinished degree, and six respondents planned to seek an advanced degree beyond their present level of attainment. Four of the six in the latter group wanted to complete a Master's degree.

Other investigators (Berry and Epstein, 1963) found that respondents who indicated that they hoped to continue their education said that they wanted to do so in order to "develop new interests" and "update earlier education." They also found that more women wanted to "develop new interests" than wanted to "update earlier education." The present study appeared to support that finding. Ten women reported they wanted to "develop new interests" and "update education" both,

while nine indicated the development of new interests only, and five wanted to update earlier education. Only three respondents wished to continue "for economic reasons."

The attitude of husbands towards their wives' continuing their educations was more generous than was found regarding outside employment. None of the women in the total group said that their husbands would disapprove of their continuing their education. Ten women reported their husbands would view such action "with tolerance," nineteen said "with enthusiasm," and six had never discussed educational plans or aspirations with their husbands.

TABLE 6

AMOUNT OF EDUCATION AND  
DESIRE TO ADD TO EDUCATION

		Amount of Education				
		Non-college		College		
Desire to Add to Education	Yes	Fo 8 (.32)	Fe 10.0	Fo 17 (.68)	Fe 15.0	25 (1.00)
	No	6 (.60)	4.0	4 (.40)	6.0	10 (1.00)
		14		21		35
						$\chi^2 = 2.333ns$

Fo-frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
ns, not significant

## Plans and Expectations Regarding Community, Social, and Leisure Activities, and Major Undertakings With Husbands

### Organizational Membership

Although the respondents in the college group belonged to a slightly larger number of organizations than did the non-college group, the difference was not large. Eleven in the college group belonged to six or more organizations as compared to four in the non-college group who were involved in that many. A similar slight difference was found between the respondents' level of educational attainment and their expectations of joining new or additional organizations when their children were grown. Women in both groups who belonged to child-related organizations planned to drop memberships when their children were grown. Practically all of them expressed relief at the prospects of discontinuing PTA.

### Leisure Activities

About half of the women in both the college and non-college groups reported new leisure time activities. Four of the non-college group and eleven of the college group indicated the acquirement of a relatively new spare-time activity. The range of these new activities included individual sports (5), art of some kind (5), gardening (2), knitting (1), a women's pilot group (1), and entertaining foreign visitors (1). All of these activities were of such a nature that they could be expanded when the postparental period arrived. Reading,



sewing, and bridge were the most frequently-mentioned favorite present spare-time activities with spectator and individual sports, cultural activities, and handicrafts listed by many women in both groups.

The fact that slightly more of the college than non-college group (11 as compared to 4) had recently acquired a new activity might have had some relationship to earlier academic training which prompted the eleven in the college group to want to "branch out." On the other hand, such "branching out" might have been due to each individual woman's nature, interests of husbands and friends, or pure chance. Whatever the reason, such increase in leisure time activity might later, as well as presently, add to life satisfaction.

#### Plans with Husbands

The question "Have you and your husband made any plans for major undertakings when the children leave home?" evoked a far greater number of negative than positive responses from both groups (22 as compared to 13). The breakdown of responses within each group was as follows: four of the non-college and nine of the college group said they had made plans, and ten of the non-college and twelve of the college answered negatively regarding the making of plans. Nine of the women giving positive responses had vague plans for travel which included trips abroad. One of those indicating traveling plans admitted she had never talked about such plans with her husband, while

another said "no particular plans, possibly might travel." Of the four with more definite positive plans, one woman reported plans for moving from Wichita, one said her husband was looking forward to an early retirement to do some writing, another said her husband planned obtaining a doctorate degree in psychology, and a fourth woman and her husband planned to build a smaller home, an idea mentioned incidentally by several others.

The relationship between the women's amount of education and their plans with their husbands for major undertakings when their children were grown did not warrant statistical analysis.

#### Plans for Use of Time in Postparental Period Presently Occupied by Children

Absorption with the demands of growing children apparently has prevented the women interviewed for this study, regardless of their educational level, from planning very specifically for the time presently occupied by duties, responsibilities, and activities related to their children when these activities and duties are no longer necessary. The relationship between the amount of education and extent of planning for the use of time in the postparental period presently filled with child-related activities was nonsignificant as depicted in Table 7.

TABLE 7

AMOUNT OF EDUCATION AND PLANS FOR USE OF TIME  
IN POSTPARENTAL PERIOD PRESENTLY OCCUPIED BY CHILDREN

		Amount of Education			
		Non-college		College	
Have made plans for use of time in post-parental period now used for children	Yes	Fo 7 (.41)	Fe 6.8	Fo 10 (.59)	Fe 10.2
	No	7 (.39)	7.2	11 (.61)	10.8
		14		21	35
					$\chi^2 = .019ns$

Fo-frequency obtained; Fe-frequency expected  
Numbers within parentheses indicate proportions  
ns, not significant

Of the seventeen women from the total group who answered positively, six hinted at plans for working at paid employment full or part-time, six considered more volunteer work related to helping services, eight mentioned taking classes of various types, two planned heightened activity of a political nature, and others said they were going to do things that they had always wanted to do. (The itemized plans totaled more than seventeen because several respondents suggested more than one possible plan.)

Of the total negative responses, eight women said they hadn't thought about it, while ten women admitted that they

had no plans for the time presently absorbed by their growing children when the responsibilities in that area were lessened. Some of the negative responses evoked further comments such as "I hate to think about it," "I feel like I still have a long time yet (her youngest child was seven years of age)," "Live today and let tomorrow take care of itself," and "I'm avoiding thinking about it." These comments were from women in both groups.

The investigator had expected to find few actual plans for the postparental period. Apparently, amount of education among the women within the scope of the present study made little difference in their planning.

#### Postparental Plans and Children

Women who were presently involved in particularly active roles of motherhood, either with several children or preschool-age children, were expected to have had less opportunity to think about the use of this present fully-scheduled time when children were grown and had left home. Statistical analysis by the Chi square tested the relationship between the number of children and the respondents' plans for use of time in postparental period presently occupied by child care. The relationship between the ages of the youngest children and the respondents' plans both were found to be nonsignificant.

Postparental Plans and Discussion of Plans with Husbands

Rose (1955) found that the typical male carries on his occupation as usual, and the leave-taking of the children does not call for as drastic a change in his role as in that of his wife's. Sussman (1955) theorized that in the postparental period, parents were forced to rely upon each other for activity participation, emotional support, and affectional response. The investigator of the present study was interested in whether the husbands of the women in the sample played any role in their wives' plans. Statistical analysis of the relationship between the wives plans for time in the "post-parental stage" now consumed by child care and the discussion of these plans with their husbands showed no relationship. The Chi square value was 2.341 which was nonsignificant. Of the seventeen women who answered "yes" to the question regarding plans, two said they had "frequently discussed" these plans with their husbands. Twenty-five women, not necessarily those indicating they had plans, reported "some discussion" of the postparental period with their husbands. Perhaps those who said they had plans happened to have been prompted by the interview to do a minute amount of thinking about life after their children left home during the course of the interview; therefore, they answered "yes" with some "off the cuff" plans.



Amount of Education and Expected Reaction  
To Leave-taking of Children

The final hypothesis stated that there is no difference between the college and non-college groups as expressed in their expected reactions to the anticipated changes in their lives after their children are grown. The last questions on the interview schedule asked the respondents to express their present state of expected reactions to the leave-taking of their children in terms of "anticipating no special problems," "anticipating the postparental time and preparing," "anticipating and doing nothing," or "facing the problem when the time comes." Three of the twenty-one in the college group reported "anticipating and preparing" as compared to four in the non-college group. The greatest number (27) in both groups "anticipated no special problems" or "planned to face the problem when the time came." There also was no relationship found between the women who reported plans for use of time in postparental period and their expected reactions to the anticipated changes associated with the leave-taking of their children.

Visualization of Life After Leave-taking of Children

The question "How do you visualize your life after the children are grown?" was included to elicit an almost open-end-question type of response. The women's comments were



interesting and varied and, in many cases, indicative of nebulous expectations regarding their lives when their children were no longer living in their parental homes. There appeared to be no difference in the nature of responses given by the college group and the non-college group. The total group of respondents' comments might be categorized loosely as follows:

Visualizations of Optimism

"Very happy, serene."

"I think I shall thoroughly enjoy it."

"I think I will enjoy it. I don't think I'm that dependent on them (the children) for my well-being at all."

"I don't visualize it as being a great deal different.

It was a change to have a child; it will be a change when she is gone."

"Assuming I still have my husband, everything will be fine."

"Very interesting."

"It will be different. I only have one child, and I don't get bored easily. I don't have to have a lot of activity."

Visualizations of New Freedom and Time

"Much freer."

"More free to pursue things that interest me."

"A little less hectic; household chores will be easier."

"Quiet. A bit more free. More time to do things I want to do."

"Having time to do things I haven't had time to do before."

"Probably will be filled with things I don't have time for now."

#### Visualizations of Ample Activity

"Just or almost as busy as now. Always other things to do."

"Don't know--we're busy people and will still be busy when they are not here."

"Very busy."

"Whole new career. I don't intend it to be lonesome."

"So hard to visualize now. We will have lots of activity and won't be lonely."

"Active, but we (the investigator and the respondent) have talked about that enough already."

"Plan to travel."

#### Visualizations Included Intergenerational Relationships

"Kind of hard to say. Different. I would say we will keep it interesting and look forward to grandchildren."

"Quite active; is quite active now and will continue to be so. We will look after grandchildren."

"Naturally I will be more free and busier taking care of grandchildren."

"Will be working part-time, participating in more outside activities, and looking after grandchildren."

Visualizations of Uncertainty and Lonesomeness

"I vacillate. Sometimes it seems dismal, other times like something to look forward to."

"Varying emotions. Some days I think it would be nice; others I think it will be lonesome."

"Lonesome for a while. We will fill in with grandchildren. Able to fill in time while doing something interesting."

"It will take some adjustment but hope we will still see their families. It will be different--kind of lonesome."

"Peaceful. It will be awful lonesome. I hate to answer this one."

"I hope interesting and active. I hope not dull."

"Unless I go back to work or do more volunteer work, I will have time on my hands."

Lack of Visualization

"Haven't given it much thought." (2)

"Hope it isn't too boring. I may need time to develop skills and interests. I haven't given it much thought."

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The purpose of the study was to learn the nature and extent of plans and expectations for the postparental period of women now involved in full-time motherhood and homemaking and to compare the plans and expected reactions of two groups, college and non-college women.

Thirty-five women whose oldest children were pupils at Robinson Junior High School, Wichita, Kansas, and whose occupations for the past ten years had been full-time homemakers were interviewed. Instruments included a check list for general information and an orally administered interview schedule. Questions that elicited answers that could be enumerated and coded were analyzed by use of chi square tests. Answers also were examined in relation to amount of education by placing the women in two groups, the non-college group which contained fourteen respondents and the college group which contained twenty-one respondents.

The hypothesis which posed that there was no difference between the two groups as expressed in their desire for postparental employment was rejected at the .05 level. The remaining hypotheses were accepted because no significant differences were found between the two groups in regard to plans and expectations for the postparental period in the

areas of outside employment; additional education; community, social and leisure activities; major undertakings with husbands; and use of time presently occupied by childrearing. The relationships of factors other than amount of education to employment plans were tested and found to be significant. Family income was significantly related to employment plans, and husbands' views of wives' employment and employment plans were highly related.

The extent of planning for the use of time in the post-parental period presently filled with child-related activities was slight and vague at best. There was evidence of little or no discussion with husbands of the expected additional time made available upon children's departures. When asked about their reactions to anticipated changes in their lives after leave-taking of children, the greatest number in both groups anticipated no special problems or planned to face the problem when the time came.

Although most of the women anticipated no special problems or planned to face the problem when the time came, a question which asked them to visualize their lives after their children were grown brought forth comments with threads of uncertainty, lonesomeness, and dependence on children's living near enough to provide activity with grandchildren mingled with some answers of time for new or long-awaited activity and expressions of optimism.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the literature emphasized the sense of futility faced by postparental women and of the importance of women's planning for the segment of life between forty and seventy, the findings of the present investigation reiterated the charge of Lloyd-Jones (1958) that women were looking no further into the future than did their grandmothers. The plight of the well-educated middle class woman has served as the subject of numerous journal articles, books, and popular magazine selections. Apparently, education had little or no effect on the subjects' plans and expectations as discovered within the scope of this study. Wishes of their families, especially their husbands, had noticeable effects on their plans. Since the respondents selected had not worked full-time outside the home in the past ten years, occupational interests, if ever present, had declined, and the women did not want to face the pressure of such employment in later years. The same retreat from pressure might have applied to their educational plans in that many desired additional education but had no actual plans in that direction.

The expressed reactions to the anticipated changes in activity upon leave-taking of children were tinged with a



lack of realism and foresight, particularly when compared with some of the visualizations of life after children were grown. Continuity within intergenerational families was a visualization mentioned several times. With today's mobile society, such reliance upon proximity of grandchildren might have been unjustified.

The implications of this study point to the importance of guidance of women as young girls to view their lives as a whole rather than only to the point of marriage and child-bearing. The value and need of such guidance was stressed throughout the literature but apparently was not enforced at the time the subjects of this study were in educational institutions. Guidance for the middle years cannot be limited to school girls but should be made available to women who are nearing proximity with the postparental period.

Guidance should not be limited to girls and women but extended to boys and men, since their views appear to be extremely influential. Through their own education for a total life plan, women can educate their sons so that as adult husbands and fathers they can share in the planning for the anticipated changes of the postparental period. The collaboration of husbands with wives is essential in developing the new roles and relationships necessary in the postparental period.

This study was limited in scope and restricted because of a small number in the sample which was taken from one section of a midwestern first class city. Results of the study did point to the need for additional research with women who are nearing the "empty nest" time in their lives that would substantiate or repudiate the findings of the present study. Would a study of women whose oldest children are seniors in high school bring forth clearer planning? Would a study of college-educated women in a lower income bracket show more dissatisfaction with full-time homemaking because they did not have the financial resources for household help and leisure time pursuits as did the women in the present study? Since research related to the postparental period only began in the 1950's, unanswered questions are still abundant as more and more women marry younger, bear children earlier, live longer, and face the pangs and/or new freedoms of the postparental period.

APPENDIX

Mrs. John Doe  
1000 Main Street  
Wichita, Kansas

Dear Mrs. Doe:

You have been selected as someone who can make a real contribution to a research study I am conducting for the Department of Family and Child Development, Kansas State University, regarding a special phase of family living. Many developments of the past half century have brought about marked social changes for women, without clearly defining what is expected of them in their various and changing roles. With younger marriages and earlier childbearing, a relatively new stage has become a major part of the family life cycle, the fifteen to twenty years a couple has together between the time the children leave home and the time for retirement.

The study I am engaged in is concerned with the plans and expectations women who are presently involved in active motherhood and full-time homemaking have for this new phase of family living. I am interested in interviewing women who fulfill certain criteria: married and living with husband; no paid full-time work in the past ten years; oldest child in junior high school.

I believe that you satisfy these criteria and hope that you will be interested in cooperating in this study by permitting me to interview you. The interview will involve possibly thirty minutes of your time, at your convenience. In becoming part of this research--in which, of course, anonymity will be assured and information kept confidential--you will be doing a real service for wives and mothers, upon whom family well-being so directly depends. I believe that you will find this an interesting experience as well.

I will telephone you within the next week to discuss your willingness to participate in this study and schedule a convenient time for an interview. Your involvement will consist of answering short factual questions about yourself and your family on a check list and sharing with me some of your ideas and expectations. I am looking forward to visiting with you.

Sincerely yours,

Margaret Ryan

## FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_ Year in school 7 8 9  
(circle present grade)

Are you the oldest child in your family? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Father's name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(occupation)

Place check beside last year of school completed:

Grade school \_\_\_\_\_ High school \_\_\_\_\_ College 1 yr. \_\_\_\_\_ 2 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_

3 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ 4 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(occupation)

Place check beside last year of school completed:

Grade school \_\_\_\_\_ High school \_\_\_\_\_ College 1 yr. \_\_\_\_\_ 2 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_

3 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ 4 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Has your mother worked full-time outside the home at any time

in the past ten years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If answer is yes, at what kind of job? \_\_\_\_\_

For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Interview no. \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please answer questions by placing an X by the response that applies to you or by filling in the information requested.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Age at which married: Husband \_\_\_\_\_ Wife \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is present marriage your first marriage? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age of husband at present \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Your age at present \_\_\_\_\_
5. Occupation of husband \_\_\_\_\_
6. Home: owned \_\_\_\_\_ rented \_\_\_\_\_
7. Income: Less than \$5,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 to 10,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 to 20,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 to 30,000 \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of children--sex (M for male and F for female), ages, year in school.

	Sex	Age	Year in school
1)	_____	_____	_____
2)	_____	_____	_____
3)	_____	_____	_____
4)	_____	_____	_____
5)	_____	_____	_____
6)	_____	_____	_____

## EDUCATION

9. Place an X by the answer that best describes your education. Check answer that relates closest to last year completed.

\_\_\_\_\_ graduated from high school

\_\_\_\_\_ attended and/or graduated from business college, nurses' training, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ attended college but did not graduate

\_\_\_\_\_ graduated from college



Interview no. \_\_\_\_\_

## POSTPARENTAL PERIOD PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Answer all questions as nearly as possible in light of your present situation.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Are you employed at the present time? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you been employed at any time since the birth of your children? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you been employed at any time in the past ten years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. If answer to numbers 2 or 3 was yes, job or jobs held:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you work while attending high school? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
6. Job or jobs held:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did you work while attending college, business college, nurses' training, etc.? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
8. Job or jobs held:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_
9. Was there an interval between the completion of your education and the time of your marriage? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, how long? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Were you employed at this time? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

11. Job or jobs held:

\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time \_\_\_\_\_

12. If answer to number 10 was yes, did you like your work?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you plan to take a job in the foreseeable future?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

14. If so, at approximately which of these times?

\_\_\_\_\_ last child begins school \_\_\_\_\_ all children are in high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_ all children are in junior high \_\_\_\_\_ all children are living away from home

15. If you are planning to take a job in the foreseeable future, would you do this (check responses which apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ for economic reasons \_\_\_\_\_ to fill a void when children are gone  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to develop new skills or interests \_\_\_\_\_ to use earlier education or skills  
 \_\_\_\_\_ as a change from household routine \_\_\_\_\_ for other reasons (please describe)

16. If you found it necessary to seek a job next week, what kind of job do you feel you could qualify for? \_\_\_\_\_

17. If you chose to seek a job, what kind of occupation would you enjoy pursuing? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you believe that you would need additional education or training to prepare you for the occupation you would enjoy?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what kind of education or training (please describe)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you think the necessary additional education or training for the kind of job you would like would keep you from planning future employment? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
20. As you see it now, would you like to work outside the home when your children are grown? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
21. Do you expect that you will work outside the home when your children are grown? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
22. How would your husband view your being employed at that time? Favorably \_\_\_\_ Unfavorably \_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_

#### EDUCATION

23. Are you presently enrolled in classes of any kind?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
If yes, what class or classes and where? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Do you plan to complete an unfinished diploma or degree?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_  
If no, what is the reason? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Do you plan to seek an advanced diploma or degree beyond your present education? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, what diploma or degree? \_\_\_\_\_
26. Do you want to continue or add to your formal education in any way? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_
27. If answer to previous question was yes, would you do this (check as many responses as apply)  
\_\_\_\_ for economic reasons

- ☐ to develop new skills or interests  
☐ to up-date earlier education or skills  
☐ for other reasons (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

28. How do you think your husband would view your continuing your education?

- ☐ with enthusiasm  
☐ with tolerance  
☐ with disapproval  
☐ have never discussed it

#### COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

29. How would you describe your relationship to your community?

Active ☐ Moderately active ☐ Inactive ☐

30. To what clubs and organizations do you now belong?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Total number \_\_\_\_\_

31. Do you presently hold office in any of these, or have you held an office in the past? Yes ☐ No ☐

32. How do you feel about your role in community activities?

(check one) Satisfied ☐ Moderately satisfied ☐  
 Dissatisfied ☐

33. Do you expect to drop membership in any clubs or organizations when your children are grown? Yes ☐ No ☐  
 If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do you expect to join any new clubs or organizations when your children are grown? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes,

what ones? \_\_\_\_\_

35. In which clubs and organizations of which you are now a member do you expect to continue membership when your children are grown? \_\_\_\_\_
36. What are your favorite spare time activities? \_\_\_\_\_
37. Which of these are of long-standing? \_\_\_\_\_
38. Which of these activities are new? \_\_\_\_\_
39. What do you and your husband enjoy doing together? \_\_\_\_\_
40. Have you and your husband made any plans for major undertakings when the children leave home? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
If yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_
41. Are there any things that you or you and your husband have postponed doing because of family responsibilities? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

#### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

42. Do you chauffeur any of your children to and from school? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

43. Do any of your children take special classes or lessons (such as music lessons, dancing lessons, art classes, etc.)? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
44. Do you chauffeur or accompany them to these lessons or classes? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
45. Do you ever help any of your children with homework? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
46. Do you assist in any community activities (such as Scout den mother, PTA officer, 4-H leader, etc.) related to your children? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, what activities?  
\_\_\_\_\_
47. Are there any activities that you attend only because the activity (such as Little League baseball, swim club meets, etc.) involves one of your children? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, describe activities \_\_\_\_\_
48. What are the activities related to your children that you enjoy most? \_\_\_\_\_
49. Are there any activities related to your children that you will especially miss when your children are grown? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, what activities? \_\_\_\_\_
50. Have you made any plans for the time presently occupied by duties, responsibilities, and activities related to your children when these duties and activities are no



longer necessary? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Haven't thought about it \_\_\_\_ If yes, describe your plans \_\_\_\_\_

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51. How do you visualize your life after your children are grown? \_\_\_\_\_
52. Have you ever discussed with your husband this time when the children will no longer be at home?  
No \_\_\_\_ Some discussion \_\_\_\_ Frequently discuss it \_\_\_\_
53. People have different ways of reacting to a new phase of living; some of the ways are: (1) anticipate no special problems, (2) anticipate and prepare, (3) anticipate and do nothing, or (4) face the problem when the time comes. In looking ahead to the time when your children are no longer at home, describe your present state of expectations and/or plans. \_\_\_\_\_
- 
54. Would you like to have a copy of the results of this study? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

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PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE POSTPARENTAL PERIOD  
AMONG THIRTY-FIVE SELECTED MOTHERS IN WICHITA, KANSAS

by

MARGARET WEIGLE RYAN

B. A., Southwestern College, 1955

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

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In our society with its emphasis on youth, mothers become so concerned with their children's growing that they do not think ahead to the time when their children will no longer be part of the parental home. Because early childbearing has resulted in an early release from parental duties, and a healthy, lengthened life span has postponed widowhood, most married couples can anticipate an increased duration of time between the busy years of childbearing and the aging years of retirement, a duration of time that has recently become identified as a research area.

Since literature stressed planning as a necessary element to serve as a guide in making an effective transition from the responsibilities of childrearing to the postparental period, the present study concentrated on determining if women were giving prior consideration to the postparental period. The study was planned to learn the nature and extent of plans, as well as expectations, of women now involved in the active roles of motherhood and full-time homemaking. The objectives were: (1) to discover specific plans that have been made in anticipation of the postparental period by college and non-college women whose oldest children are in junior high school and (2) to compare the expectations and plans of the two groups--college and non-college women. It was hypothesized that there was no difference between the two groups with regard to plans they were making for outside employment, in their desire for employment during the postparental period; in their plans for adding to their formal education; in their

plans and expectations for the postparental period regarding community, social, and leisure activities, and undertakings with their husbands; in their plans for use of time in the postparental period presently occupied by child-related activities and responsibilities; and in their expected reactions to the anticipated changes in their lives after their children are grown.

Thirty-five women whose oldest children were in junior high school were interviewed in their homes by the author, using an original interview schedule and check list. The women had not been employed full-time outside the home in the past ten years.

Amount of education and indications of "liking" to work outside the home when the children were grown were shown to be related. A significant number of college women expressed a desire to be employed at that time. The remaining null hypotheses were accepted because no significant differences were found between the two groups in regard to plans and expectations for the postparental period in the areas of outside employment; additional education; community, social and leisure activities; major undertakings with husbands; and use of time presently occupied by childrearing. The relationships of factors other than amount of education to employment plans were tested and found to be significant. Family income was significantly related to employment plans, and husbands' views of wives' employment and employment plans were highly related.

Although most of the women anticipated no special problems or planned to face the problem when the time came, a question which asked them to visualize their lives after their children were grown brought forth comments with threads of uncertainty, lonesomeness, and dependence on children's living near enough to provide activity with grandchildren mingled with some answers of time for new or long-awaited activity and expressions of optimism.